

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently amended) A knife guard for selectively guarding a tip of a blade of a knife while exposing at least a portion of a cutting edge of the blade, the knife including a handle coupled to the blade, the knife guard comprising:
 - (a) a handle portion for supporting the handle of the knife when the knife is placed in the knife guard;
 - (b) a blade portion coupled to the handle portion for partially receiving the blade ~~such that at least a portion of the cutting edge is exposed, wherein the blade portion includes a channel having a forward end, a rear end, and a middle portion extending between the forward and rear ends, wherein a height of the middle portion is less than a height of the forward end and a height of the rear end such that when the knife is placed in the knife guard with the cutting edge exposed, the forward and rear ends of the channel extend above the cutting edge and the middle portion is disposed below the cutting edge to expose at least a portion of the cutting edge; and~~
 - (c) a nose portion coupled to the forward end of the blade portion for covering the tip of the blade.
2. (Previously presented) The knife guard of Claim 1, wherein the handle portion, the blade portion, and the nose portion are rigidly coupled to one another.
3. (Original) The knife guard of Claim 1, wherein the nose portion is substantially bulbous in shape.
4. (Original) The knife guard of Claim 1, wherein the handle portion includes a channel for receiving and supporting the handle of the knife.
5. (Canceled)
6. (Currently amended) The knife guard of Claim ~~[[5]]~~ 1, wherein the channel of the blade portion opens into the channel of the handle portion.
7. (Original) The knife guard of Claim 6, wherein a width of the channel of the blade portion is less than a width of the channel of the handle portion, thereby forming a

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1. (Currently amended) A knife guard for selectively guarding a tip of a blade of a knife while exposing at least a portion of a cutting edge of the blade, the knife including a handle coupled to the blade, the knife guard comprising:

(a) a handle portion for supporting the handle of the knife when the knife is placed in the knife guard;

(b) a blade portion coupled to the handle portion for partially receiving the blade ~~such that at least a portion of the cutting edge is exposed, wherein the blade portion includes a channel having a forward end, a rear end, and a middle portion extending between the forward and rear ends, wherein a height of the middle portion is less than a height of the forward end and a height of the rear end such that when the knife is placed in the knife guard with the cutting edge exposed, the forward and rear ends of the channel extend above the cutting edge and the middle portion is disposed below the cutting edge to expose at least a portion of the cutting edge; and~~

(c) a nose portion coupled to the forward end of the blade portion for covering the tip of the blade.

2. (Previously presented) The knife guard of Claim 1, wherein the handle portion, the blade portion, and the nose portion are rigidly coupled to one another.

3. (Original) The knife guard of Claim 1, wherein the nose portion is substantially bulbous in shape.

4. (Original) The knife guard of Claim 1, wherein the handle portion includes a channel for receiving and supporting the handle of the knife.

5. (Canceled)

6. (Currently amended) The knife guard of Claim ~~[[5]]~~ 1, wherein the channel of the blade portion opens into the channel of the handle portion.

7. (Original) The knife guard of Claim 6, wherein a width of the channel of the blade portion is less than a width of the channel of the handle portion, thereby forming a

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shoulder for engaging the handle of the knife where the blade portion opens into the channel of the handle portion to impede movement of the knife in the direction of the blade.

8. (Original) The knife guard of Claim 1, wherein an exterior surface of the handle portion includes a plurality of protrusions for increasing a user's grip on the handle portion.

9. (Canceled)

10. (Currently amended) A knife guard for selectively guarding a cutting edge and a tip of a blade of a knife, the knife including a handle coupled to a base of the blade, the knife guard comprising:

(a) a body having a channel for receiving and supporting the knife during use, the channel having a blade portion for receiving the blade of the knife ~~and exposing~~, wherein a height of the channel varies such that a height of a middle portion of the channel extends below a height of a forward end of the channel and a height of a rear end of the channel such that when the channel receives the blade, the height of the channel extends above a height of the blade near the tip of the blade and near the base of the blade and is disposed below the height of the blade near a middle portion of the blade to expose at least a portion of the cutting edge of the knife, and a handle portion for receiving the handle of the knife; and

(b) a nose portion coupled to the body for covering the tip of the blade.

11. (Original) The knife guard of Claim 10, wherein the nose portion is substantially bulbous in shape.

12. (Original) The knife guard of Claim 10, wherein a width of the channel of the blade portion is less than a width of the channel of the handle portion, thereby forming a shoulder for engaging the handle of the knife to impede movement of the knife in the direction of the blade.

13-15. (Canceled)

16. (Currently amended) The knife guard of Claim ~~[[14]]~~ 10, wherein the body is rigid and wherein the nose portion is rigidly coupled to the body.

17-20. (Canceled)

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21. (Currently amended) The knife guard of Claim [[14]] 10, wherein an exterior surface of the body includes a plurality of protrusions disposed on the handle portion for increasing a user's grip on the body.

22. (Canceled)

23. (Currently amended) The knife guard of Claim 1, wherein the handle portion, the blade portion, and the nose portion are adapted to removably receive the knife such that the knife [[may]] can be removed and replaced with another differently shaped knife.

24. (Currently amended) The knife guard of Claim 10, wherein the body and the nose portion are adapted to removably receive the knife such that the knife [[may]] can be removed and replaced with another differently shaped knife.

25. (Canceled)

26. (New) A method for selectively guarding a tip of a blade of a knife while exposing at least a portion of a cutting edge of the blade using a knife guard, the knife guard having a handle portion for receiving a handle of the knife, a blade portion coupled to the handle portion for receiving at least a portion of the blade, wherein the blade portion includes a channel having a forward end, a rear end, and a middle portion extending between the forward and rear ends, wherein a height of the channel varies between the forward and rear ends, and a nose portion coupled to the blade portion for guarding the tip of the blade, the method comprising:

placing the knife in the knife guard so that the handle of the knife is received within the handle portion and the blade of the knife is received by the blade portion with the forward and rear ends of the channel extending above the cutting edge and the middle portion disposed below the cutting edge to expose at least a portion of the cutting edge, and such that the nose portion covers the tip of the blade.

27. (New) The method of Claim 26, further comprising removing the knife from the knife guard.

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